

## **2002 Annual Report Executive Summary**

### **Mid-Delta Empowerment Zone Alliance**

The accomplishments and failures of the Mid-Delta Empowerment Zone Alliance, Inc. have strengthened its commitment to the grassroots communities as well as attracting leading industries to locate within the boundaries of the empowerment zone. The Mid-Delta Empowerment Zone is comprised of six counties, i.e., Bolivar, Holmes, Humphreys, Leflore, Sunflower, and Washington which include the municipalities of Rosedale, Beulah, Winstonville, Mound Bayou, Merigold, Greenville (part) Metcalfe, Indianola (Industrial Park), Sunflower, Itta Bena, Morgan City, Isola, Durant, and West.

The Mid-Delta Empowerment Zone Alliance, Inc. continues to function through its mission statement, but the methodology of conducting business has changed. Change is evident in the reorganizing of staff and restructuring the MDEZA Office into three divisions: economic development, housing development, and community development. The Economic Development Division is lead by Mr. Patrick Dunne with the assistance of Mr. Harry Smith. The Housing Development Division is lead by Ms. Theresa Dent. Ms. Dent is also responsible for computing and tracking MDEZA's Benchmark activities. Both Mr. Dunne and Ms. Dent are responsible for the community development division. For the first time since its inception, MDEZA has hired a Chief Financial Officer. Mr. Charlie White, Jr. is responsible for overseeing MDEZA's funds and making sure that future projects have the existence of sustainability.

MDEZA is glad to report that staff has been fruitful in its effort to obtain additional funding. For the first time, MDEZA has submitted an application for funding that may prolong its lifespan as well as allow MDEZA to use one of its benchmarks as a focal point. Another first worth mentioning is MDEZA's usage of funds earmarked for bonding allocation. MDEZA awarded the Holmes County Board of Supervisors \$1.5 millions in grant funds and \$17 million dollars in bonding allocation to secure the location of a tier-one supply to the Nissan Corporation (Canton, Mississippi). In addition to the tier-one supplier, Holmes County has been successful in creating and selling a unique brand of furniture. MDEZA is concentrating on rebuilding its reputation and image with the public. This will be accomplished by monthly newsletters, press releases on the projects that are awarded funds, press releases on signing of contracts between the Chief Executive Officer and sub-grantees that are published by Public Relations Officer, Contenina McNeese. Also, Ms. McNeese will be responsible for developing a comprehensive marketing plan that will enhance and promote MDEZA for future funding. In addition, Ms. McNeese and the Chief Executive Officer have attended all counties' Board of Supervisor meetings. The Chief Executive Officer is committed to serving the public and assisting in making the Mid-Delta region prosperous. The year 2003 set precedence for striving for excellence.

On January 18, 2003, new officers were elected to govern the Mid-Delta Empowerment Zone Alliance, Inc. The new officers are: Mrs. Karen Crawford, Co-Chair #1; Mr. Clinton Thompson, Co-Chair #2; Mr. Scott Luth, Treasurer; and Mrs. Clara J. Davis, Secretary. The Chief Executive Officer has met with both Federal and State directors to bridge the gap with MDEZA. The success of this agency is contingent upon MDEZA and outside agencies working together for a common link in achieving the same goal: empowering the lower Mississippi delta area. Policies and procedures are constantly being evaluated for change. Currently, the Chief Executive Officer is modifying the projects' evaluation forms. This will make the grading process easier and less complicated when identifying reasons behind project failures. Staff has been working diligently in starting a community development housing organization (cdho) which will allow MDEZA to manage and assist in the building of moderate-income housing. During the December 18, 2002, Board of Commissioners' meeting, the Commissioner approved a resolution to amend MDEZA's By-Laws for MDEZA to become a charter chdo.

In conclusion, as Chief Executive Officer is responsible in making sure that MDEZA takes advantage of the lead it has over other federal funded agencies. MDEZA is the only federal funded agency that can solely concentrate on the Mid-Delta region. Therefore, the Commissioners, staff, and constituents must remember that the framework of the Mid-Delta Empowerment Zone Alliance, Inc. is embodied in the following four key principles: economic opportunity, sustainable community development, community-based partnerships, and strategic vision for change.